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APPLY

WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

August 7, 1973

MORI c03233224

Time and Place: 3:06 - 4:17 p.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Cambodia

JCS, NSA, DOS REVIEWS
COMPLETED

Participants:

Chairman -	Henry A. Kissinger	CIA -	William Colby George Carver
State -	William Porter Arthur Hummel	NSC -	Brig. Gen. Brent Scowcroft Lawrence Eagleburger Richard T. Kennedy William Stearman Jeanne W. Davis
Defense -	William Clements Robert Hill		
JCS -	Adm. Thomas Moorer Vice Adm. John Weinell		

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that a Working Group would prepare a paper on what might be done, within Congressional limitations, to provide additional assistance to the Cambodian forces and the Phnom Penh government.

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Attached to TS cover memo, HK-E409a, 6 Aug. 1973

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Mr. Kissinger: Where is George Aldrich?

Mr. Porter: He wasn't available. He is at the American Bar Association meeting. Also, I need him to get to work on these four questions that (Ambassador) Martin asked us -- they're corkers.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Colby) Could we have your briefing?

(Mr. Colby briefed from the attached text.)

Mr. Kissinger: (referring to a comment in the briefing concerning South Vietnamese attempts to reopen roads north of Saigon) Is that our friend Minh? He may be good at some things, but opening roads is certainly not one of them. He is the best guarantee of a ceasefire I know.

Mr. Colby: He has one function only and that is to protect Saigon.

Mr. Kissinger: What about this infiltration of administrative types? What losses did administrative people suffer?

Mr. Colby: They are not replacements. They are being sent south to take over administrative jobs.

Adm. Moorer: We have also seen about 4,000 vehicles on the Tang Kouk railroad. They appear to be construction equipment -- bulldozers, graders, etc. -- but this area is carrying its maximum capacity right now. Also, in Haiphong Harbor they have the highest number of ships we have ever seen -- 13 oceangoing vessels, 35 coasters and numerous trawlers and auxillary vessels. They are pouring supplies in.

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Mr. Kissinger: What sort of supplies?

Mr. Kissinger: If these are civilian supplies, they are okay, but if this is military equipment it's a different situation.

Mr. Carver: They don't draw a clear distinction between civilian and military equipment.

Mr. Colby: There are probably some tanks.

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Mr. Carver: It is true, of course, that they don't need 4,000 trucks for internal reasons. They probably plan to augment their supply shuttle into the south.

Adm. Moorer: We haven't been able to identify any purely military equipment. It seems to be bulldozers and graders.

Mr. Kissinger: It will make a lot of difference diplomatically if they are moving a lot of equipment into the south.

Adm. Moorer: The North Vietnamese don't distinguish in this way. They probably need this equipment to run down the LOC.

Mr. Kissinger: Our assumption has been that they would not start an offensive unless they had a big back-up of supplies. They did not say they would not send civilian supplies.

Adm. Moorer: They are getting some by sea also.

Mr. Kissinger: Can we see it?

Adm. Moorer: Probably at Haiphong.

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Mr. Clements: This has been very carefully considered and I thought it was

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Mr. Kissinger: I have nightmares about the danger of someone taking a run at us while we are in the midst of our own cultural revolution -- our own emergency situation. (to Mr. Colby) Could you get us a chart of available photo coverage: what we could do in a short time; what we have on standby. Could we get a comprehensive view by the end of the week?

Mr. Colby: No problem.

Mr. Kissinger: Do we plan to use the SR-71 to get a picture of North Vietnam?

Mr. Carver: Yes.

Adm. Moorer: But we have to overfly.

Mr. Carver: We will be covering Haiphong at maximum photo range -- 25 miles -- and we may get some. If we were overhead, of course, we would get better photography. We won't get too much from offshore photography.

Mr. Kissinger: I will talk to the President about this. We flew the SR-71s over North Korea.

Mr. Colby: They will be picked up.

Mr. Kissinger: So what? We are all shell-shocked here.

Mr. Carver: I am not shell-shocked -- I am just giving you the options.

Mr. Kissinger: We don't fly the SR-71s legally. The North Koreans haven't agreed to it.

Mr. Hummel: We have been flying them offshore over the DMZ and the Japan Sea.

Mr. Kissinger: I will discuss this with the President.

On Cambodia, if the fighting is now concentrated around Phnom Penh why are the insurgents gaining there? You have told me that they were hitting in places where government forces were spread thin, but government forces are concentrated around Phnom Penh.

Mr. Colby: They have the initiative. They are broken up into small units and the government just does not mount an effective opposition. The government forces are very good but the bickering among the leadership does not help.

Mr. Clements: Aren't the insurgents taking heavy casualties?

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Mr. Colby: Yes, from the bombing.

Mr. Kissinger: But that will end August 14.

Adm. Moorer: (using a map) Could I just add a little to Bill Colby's briefing. Only in the last three or four days have the FANK forces taken any initiative. This seems to be the result of our Embassy's conversations.

Mr. Kissinger: Is Enders in charge? Can he act on his own now?

Mr. Porter: (Ambassador) Swank is away. He is in Bangkok for a week's leave but will be going back to Phnom Penh.

Mr. Kissinger: We told you we wanted him brought home. Bring him home for consultation. Can Enders act?

Mr. Porter: Yes, he is in charge.

Adm. Moorer: (returning to the map) Government forces were able to push back to the river and the activity on Highways 2 and 3 has died down. One brigade of the First Division has moved in between the Mekong and Bassac Rivers. Two brigades today kicked off on an operation to move to Highway 1 and join with another force there. The river is now being protected by artillery, and convoys will be coming in on August 9 and August 13. For the first time government artillery is under coordinated control and for the first time they are using their artillery--155 and 105mm--properly. Also they have cleared Highway 5 and have kept it clear. The water is rising now too which will give the insurgents some difficulty in ambushing the trucks. Another insurgent force is about three kilometers from the airfield and the government troops have now moved against them. They have brought in three air force battalions at the airfield for security. They are now getting out about 11 kilometers -- out of the range of the 105s. The insurgents over-ran a town on highway 6 between Skoun and Kampong Cham. Two thousand troops were lost, captured or just disappeared. Government forces are flying seven more battalions into Phnom Penh to augment its defense. This will give them 23 - 24,000 men in their perimeter defense as against the insurgents' 18,000. Also the rain is beginning to have an impact. FANK now has two offensive operations going at the same time for the first time in weeks. The insurgents have changed their strategy from hitting the LOC to hitting the city. There are several reasons for this. One, they are having command and control and supply problems. Two, it is more difficult for the U.S. to bomb in a populated area. Three, their new scorched earth policy, where they have devastated 26 villages, has pushed large numbers of refugees out of the villages. Four, they feel some duress since they want the Lon Nol Government to collapse so that they can move in before August 15. They believe if they do not get in by August 15

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some outside negotiation will take place which they cannot influence.

Mr. Kissinger: Why don't they just wait for August 15 when they will have won?

Adm. Moorer: They are afraid of being preempted by outsiders. Also, they are taking very heavy casualties.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Colby) Why do you think they are doing this?

Mr. Colby: They are keeping the pressure on. They have to in order to create tension within the leadership.

Adm. Moorer: They are doing the very best they can.

Mr. Carver: They are telling the leadership that, even with American bombing, the noose is tightening. If this is so without bombing, what will it be like when the bombing ends?

Mr. Kissinger: What will Phnom Penh do after August 15?

Mr. Colby: If the leadership continues to bicker, the troops will decide the hell with it.

Mr. Kissinger: If Phnom Penh goes we want it to be absolutely clear that the U.S. was not responsible for its fall. We don't want anyone to sit back and wring their hands. We want energetic people who will try to do something about this. If the situation in Phnom Penh falls apart, we want to be sure that they did it to themselves and that there was no lack on our part.

Mr. Porter: There is no question that you have a great many energetic people pursuing this activity.

Mr. Clements: The leadership is already breaking up.

Mr. Colby: It could happen at any time. When Sirik Matak says he is prepared to get rid of Lon Nol by any means, that's strong language--a real shocker.

Mr. Carver: You have a real psychological leadership problem. With more troops and guns and supplies they could hang on for four to six months. But on any given morning any two members of the High Council can decide

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that it is a lost cause and throw the others out.

Mr. Kissinger: Then what?

Mr. Colby: Then you have a negotiation with the government in a very weak position. That's why the enemy is pressing -- they want them on their knees.

Mr. Kissinger: Then Sihanouk would come back?

Mr. Colby: As a figurehead. Sihanouk's natural base is in the government.

Mr. Kissinger: Right. Sihanouk's utility diminishes, the stronger the Khmer Rouge get.

Mr. Colby: He is useful to the Khmer Rouge. He can take over the authority of government without turning it out and replacing it completely. It would be a problem for the Khmer Rouge if they had to rebuild the whole government structure. If they can take over an existing structure under Sihanouk it will save them trouble. Sihanouk can provide the linkage.

Adm. Moorer: The key is the Council sticking together. The insurgents are not having an easy time.

Mr. Colby: Without the bombing they may last for up to three months; with bombing it might be six months.

Mr. Kissinger: I thought you said without the bombing they could last up to six months. I won't hold you to that, though. Now you say a maximum of three months?

Mr. Colby: That's a personal statement. But the indicators of their coming apart at the seams are right in front of you. The divisions are reasonably well organized and armed. They are not the best troops in the world but they are there.

Adm. Moorer: It isn't a matter of their capability -- it is a question of cohesion and leadership. The insurgents have some of the same problems.

Mr. Carver: The insurgents are also Cambodians which is our greatest hope of survival.

Adm. Moorer: The insurgents want to bring about the downfall of the government by themselves.

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Mr. Kissinger: I am not aware of any outside influence for negotiation.

Mr. Colby: But there might be a negotiation which was more favorable to the government.

Mr. Kissinger: If there is no collapse, will there be a rice shortage?

Adm. Moorer: They've got a 49-day supply and two more convoys coming.

Mr. Colby: They are not too badly off.

Adm. Moorer: There is a rice shortage in all of Southeast Asia but it has nothing to do with the war. U.S. exports are short and Japan is short. We have a paper on this that I will send over to you.

Mr. Kissinger: How about GVN protection of convoys?

Mr. Porter: We have a cable over here which takes care of the problem in an unencouraging way. There are serious legal questions. It is contrary to the intent of the Congress and might trigger the Case Amendment. The cable has been here since August 3 and it should be sent.

Adm. Moorer: There is also a question whether the Mekong River is an international waterway. I was queried by Fulbright on what the South Vietnamese could do in Cambodia. The Congress is pretty negative on this-- Mansfield, Fulbright and Symington.

Mr. Porter: So are the lawyers.

Mr. Kissinger: I want to get all departments off the wicket that we are bombing neutral Cambodia. We are bombing North Vietnamese troops in neutral Cambodia who are killing Americans. And we are doing this with the approval of the Cambodian government.

Adm. Moorer: When Fulbright took the line with me that this was a violation of sovereignty, I told him there was no violation of sovereignty when the Chief of State had acquiesced in the action.

Mr. Kissinger: And when the North Vietnamese were killing Americans in his country. It is the most amazing doctrine that forces can use neutral territory to kill Americans and can be completely free of reprisals. This just has not sunk in on the public mind.

Adm. Moorer: It is a part of the whole double standard.

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Mr. Kissinger: I have been shocked at the testimony of some government witnesses. We are not bombing Cambodia. The Congress questions whether the President has the right to bomb a neutral country without telling the Congress. First, we told the Congress. Also, we are not bombing Cambodia -- we are bombing North Vietnamese who are killing American soldiers on neutral territory. The Cambodian government asked us to. What the hell are we apologizing for? We are just not getting this across in our testimony. We are bombing only a strip of territory which is occupied by the North Vietnamese -- in Cambodia. Let's say we are bombing North Vietnamese with the acquiescence of a neutral government. I don't understand the current doctrine of international law where one side can use neutral territory and the other has no right to protect itself. We are too apologetic. We are like beaten dogs.

Mr. Clements: You sit in the grandstand on Thursday and watch Tom Moorer and me testify.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's use the phrase that we are bombing North Vietnamese troops who are using neutral territory to kill Americans and that we are doing this with the approval of the Cambodian government.

Adm. Moorer: They just won't accept the fact that we have the right to do anything. Everything we do is evil and everything the other side does is okay.

Mr. Clements: We have no apologies to make.

Mr. Porter: Can we get a decision on the Mekong cable?

Mr. Kissinger: Not here. I want more discussion. We will get it before the end of the day.

Mr. Hummel: It has DOD clearance.

Adm. Moorer: The only way is to let Cambodian MAP pay for it. It is illegal to use MASF funds. Let South Vietnam transfer the equipment back to the U.S. The U.S. can give it to the Cambodians and let them pay for it with MAP.

Mr. Kissinger: There may be some way around this. Can we give naval vessels to Cambodia through MAP?

Adm. Moorer: We are stretching this every way we can.

Mr. Kennedy: Why not loan them ships?

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Adm. Moorer: They have to operate them.

Mr. Stearman: They could use the Cambodian crews on the coastal Swifts to man river escort vessels.

Mr. Kennedy: And get the South Vietnamese to take over the coastal patrols.

Mr. Stearman: And shift the Cambodian crews to the Mekong.

Mr. Hummel: I understand that was discussed yesterday and it is being looked into. If South Vietnamese equipment were in U.S. hands it could be turned over to Cambodia. (Ambassador) Martin is suggesting air cover for the convoys on humanitarian grounds. The lawyers say 'no' if it is done on a reimbursable basis. If it isn't reimbursable, it is okay.

Mr. Kissinger: If we do not reimburse them for this, could we reimburse them somewhere else?

Mr. Porter: Martin wants to be sure that this would not result in a cut-back elsewhere. He is seeing Thieu Saturday morning.

Adm. Moorer: Thieu says he will do everything "practical." The Congress is being completely unreasonable. Senator McClellan thinks that by stopping the bombing there will be no more aid of any kind for Cambodia.

Mr. Kissinger: I don't know how dangerous we are as an enemy but we are murder as an ally. Let's think about this convoy protection.

Mr. Clements: What if we could clear out the insurgents around the river and get artillery there?

Mr. Carver: In the dry season they could control both banks beyond rocket range.

Mr. Kissinger: How about loaning them some boats?

Adm. Moorer: We will look at it, but I think they have all the boats they can handle now without a training program. Perhaps we could shift the areas covered.

Mr. Kissinger: What can we do now to enhance the period of survival? If they can last more than three months, I am convinced there will be negotiations.

Mr. Carver: It depends on the cost.

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Mr. Colby: It is a circular situation. If we want them to get with it we will have to look for a new program and new leadership. And we don't have a search for new leadership because we are hung up on the old leadership. We are so hamstrung by the limitations.

Mr. Kissinger: Within the limitations let's see what a program would look like. As I have said so often, there are no awards for losing elegantly. Our Congressional adversaries want to prove that 1970 was wrong. If 1970 was wrong then everything was wrong and we have thrown 50,000 casualties down a rathole. We have to stand up and take the heat before the Congressional committees.

Mr. Hill: Adm. Moorer and Art Hummel took the heat and came right back at them the other day. They didn't give an inch.

Mr. Kissinger: I admire them for it. But our concern is that they hang on in Phnom Penh as long as possible -- first, to demonstrate that we didn't sell them out. Second, if it works, there will be a negotiation and, third, to protect South Vietnam. When I met Lee Kuan Yew at Kennedy Airport the other day at his request he was panicky. He is normally a very cool, calm man. If he thinks the situation will collapse we are in bad shape.

Mr. Carver: If Cambodia goes by collapse and by giving the Communists what they want, and if they sign an agreement in Laos, North Vietnam has its flanks secured.

Mr. Kissinger: And the Congress has removed any doubt that we would come in if they should launch a big offensive against South Vietnam.

Mr. Porter: Could some of our intelligence people stay with the Cambodian units?

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Kennedy) Let's get a working group to see what we might do within Congressional limits in the spirit of the discussion here. I don't know what it might be, but for the U.S. to write off the area is not in our interest. China would have no choice except to side with Hanoi. And their instinct would be to counterbalance Hanoi.

Mr. Clements: In those circumstances, why wouldn't Thieu lose his reluctance to help? He could buy some time.

Mr. Kissinger: Would he lose more by going in than staying out? If he could gain a year, that would be one situation. But if he would gain one to three months, he would have to ask himself whether it would be worth the risk. If the outcome were the same, why waste his resources in a losing cause?

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Adm. Moorer: He would lose in the Congress anyway.

Mr. Kissinger: We are facing a very bitter situation. The Congressmen may be crazy but it is our duty to do what is right.

Mr. Colby: But we need leadership in Cambodia to go with a program.

Mr. Kissinger: Put that in the paper we're doing. We have been taking the attitude that if a situation is not perfect, we won't do anything. I have been willing for three months to throw Lon Nol into the negotiation. We could have settled it in mid-June when we had the Chinese engaged. But the Chinese are not crazy-- they know our situation. If someone could show us that we could remove Lon Nol and gain three to six extra months, that's a different situation. I consider Lon Nol expendable.

Mr. Carver: One reason for the bickering among the leadership is that some members of the Council think Lon Nol is actually insane.

Mr. Kissinger: If Lon Nol were out, do we assume Sirik Matak and In Tam would go after each other?

Mr. Colby: Sirik Matak perhaps.

Mr. Kissinger: I have a silver bowl from Sirik Matak which was on the table of my office when the Chinese Ambassador came in to see me. He hasn't been there since. (to Mr. Porter) We want to get your cable cleared. We will get the working group together and have another meeting of this group on Friday (August 10). I am not blaming the people here, but the White House position is to do what is right. If Congress wants to brutalize us, they will. But now we have four weeks while Congress is not in session. Some people even in Congress are getting worried about the situation.

Mr. Colby: The President's letter did a lot of good.

Adm. Moorer: Senator Fong really bore down on me saying he wanted to get all of the Americans out so we would not have any excuse to go back in to rescue them. When Fulbright asked me if we would use military force to get them out, I said "of course; would you want us not to protect Americans worldwide?" Fulbright said 'no!'. Symington apparently knew about (Ambassador) Swank's message about taking Americans out.

Mr. Porter: He has recommended a thinning out of Americans. There is a cable over here for clearance.

Mr. Hummel: Two months ago we asked him to consider whether we could cut the numbers that might have to be evacuated. It was a contingency plan.

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Mr. Kissinger: We will look at it and try to get it out this evening. We should have a contingency plan.

Mr. Hummel: He was suggesting thinning out non-essential people -- AID accountants, for example.

Mr. Kissinger: Dick Kennedy will convene a working group and the WSAG will meet again on Friday.

Mr. Kennedy: We will meet in my office at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Mr. Porter: What about the solatium for the accidental bombing?

Mr. Clements: We agree.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Kennedy) Let's look into the facts.

Mr. Porter: (to Mr. Clements) Then you will do the execute message?

Mr. Clements: Yes.

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